

with the bedclothes weeping  
the telephone  
filing for divorce?

If the sofa  
takes out another loan  
the cats  
get the stove  
and the trash  
can goes off on a  
vacation in the tropics  
how do I make the rent  
with mayonnaise  
in the morning?

You can't build equity  
in wheat bread  
you just can't.

Without true love  
the lawnmower sputters  
without gasoline  
the toaster gets depressed.

How am I to carry on  
with the ashtrays  
in convulsions  
the endtables  
having a nervous breakdown?

There's no tomorrow  
in the clothes dryer  
no October  
in dead Wednesday.

#### BEAUTY PACKS HER BAGS

Beauty packs her bags and  
moves out. She's fed to the teeth with  
all this pretentious bullshit, the elaborate  
posturing. And she doesn't give a goddamn  
for your amateur standing.

Another willful female hits the trail.

What's left? ruffled bedclothes  
(her scent on the pillowcase), dappled  
curtains that swell with the hot evening breeze,

swaying mountains of dirty dishes in the sink,  
suicidal cowboy -- too sad -- on the radio.

While you stumble all night room to  
room, glass of scotch in hand, two left feet,  
kicking up the carpet, knocking over lamps,  
the overflowing ashtrays, a twitch  
in each bloodshot eye,  
rivers, rivers of tears.

-- David Barker

Lakewood CA

#### CHAIN LETTER 1980

In the mail  
comes one of those chain letters.  
It starts with a prayer  
and ends with a warning:

a man who received the letter  
and did not continue it, lost  
his job. Another, not believing  
in it, threw it away  
and died 9 days later.  
PLEASE DO NOT DESTROY THIS.

And so 56 hours after re-  
ceiving this letter, it must be  
on its way (20 times copied)  
to someone else, or my own  
fate is sealed.

Some way to start a Monday.  
A prayer and a death threat.

It says a kind-hearted missionary  
from South America  
started the whole thing.

Last week, there were earthquakes.  
This week, chain letters.  
56 hours have gone by.  
I wait like someone finishing  
the last few lines of a story.  
An O. Henry ending.